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E.O. 12958: DECL: AFTER KOREAN REUNIFICATION
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KS](#) [KN](#)
SUBJECT: CODEL HYDE MEETS PRESIDENT ROH: DIFFERING
APPROACHES TO DPRK

Classified By: Amb. A. Vershbow. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) House International Relations Committee Chairman Henry Hyde and delegation discussed what President Roh Moo-hyun called differing ROK and U.S. approaches to the DPRK, as well as general alliance issues at a one-hour Blue House meeting on August 10. President Roh emphasized that the DPRK's mistrust of the United States, which the DPRK suspected backed regime change, had to be overcome before there could be progress on ending the DPRK nuclear weapons program. Pressed to speak out more on North Korean human rights, Roh described the ROK approach as working to gradually improve the life of North Koreans so that the DPRK would open up and reform, saying that a potential regime collapse would be a burden too large for South Koreans to bear. In a general discussion of alliance issues, Roh said that he agreed with Chairman Hyde that the U.S.-ROK relationship is strong, grounded on the sacrifices the Americans made in the Korean war and on our shared values of freedom and belief in a market economy. Though some people in pluralist South Korea have different views, they were not representative of the mainstream. Asked by Congressman Flake about making a training range available to the U.S. air forces stationed in the ROK, Roh said he was doing his best to resolve the issue.
END SUMMARY.

12. (C) At the August 10 meeting at Blue House, President Roh Moo-hyun began by greeting each member of the Congressional delegation and Chairman Hyde then introduced the members of the delegation by name (para 10). Hyde and President Roh both made brief opening statements while media were in the room. Hyde said that alliance issues under negotiation between the United States and the ROK could be resolved with goodwill and patience on both sides, and that Congress supports the ROK entering the Visa Waiver Program. President Roh, speaking through an interpreter, thanked Hyde for mentioning the Visa Waiver Program, said that he agreed that important issues under negotiation could be resolved, and then, raising a subject he emphasized throughout the rest of the meeting, said that the "core difficulty" facing the ROK and the United States was North Korea and its missiles. Media representatives then left the room.

DIFFERENCES ON NORTH KOREA

13. (C) President Roh, after noting that a serious underlying problem affecting the U.S.-ROK alliance was the rift within

Korean society on the U.S. presence, turned to North Korea. He said that the ROK and United States had differences on the DPRK but that he believed we could work together, and he asked for Codel Hyde delegation's views. Hyde noted the United States' respect for the Korean people's place in the world, both politically and geostrategically. He said that North Korea issues were serious but could be solved through U.S.-ROK cooperation and a united front. Roh said he agreed, but, he said with a smile, the United States and the ROK might have a different approach to the DPRK. These differences stemmed from the countries' inherently different position in the world, the U.S. with its global standing and the ROK with its position in Northeast Asia and its country divided. Roh said the ROKG was fully committed to working out the differences by talking, and committed to not making the differences public.

14. (C) Representative Rohrabacher joined the discussion noting that his father had fought for Koreans' freedom in the Korean War and that Americans were sometimes dismayed by the lack of appreciation by some people in Korea for U.S. sacrifices. Rohrabacher asked whether the ROKG could put increased attention on freedom by putting more emphasis on human rights in its discussions with North Korea, and whether the ROK could make greater efforts to accept DPRK refugees who are in China.

15. (C) Roh replied that the cornerstone of the U.S.-ROK relationship was the huge sacrifice that the United States made in the Korean War. It was on that basis that the ROK had been able to achieve economic success as well as freedom. Roh said the vast majority of South Koreans had a sense of gratitude for American sacrifices, and that the two countries were linked by common values of belief in freedom and a

market economy. Pluralism in the ROK meant that some people had different views about U.S.-Korea relations, but they were not part of the mainstream.

16. (C) On human rights and the general approach to the DPRK, Roh said, the ROK's view differed from that of the United States. The ROK believed that to establish peace on the Korean Peninsula, it was imperative not to give the DPRK the suspicion that the goal was regime change. It was very important to build trust on this issue. Should the DPRK regime collapse, the magnitude of the difficulty for the ROK would be beyond what the United States could imagine; the burden would be beyond what the South Korean people could bear. In addition, the collapse of the DPRK would likely lead to conflict between the United States and China over the future course of the Peninsula, which would also be difficult for the ROK to manage. Roh said that when the ROK says "human rights," the DPRK hears "regime change."

17. (C) On the ROK's policy on DPRK refugees, Roh said that the policy was to accommodate asylum seekers, but that a massive exodus from the DPRK would be a problem for the ROK. He added that he himself had strong human rights credentials from his time dealing with dictatorial governments of Korea, but that special circumstances on the Korean Peninsula made it difficult to approach North Korean human rights issues in the same way. Rather than focus on elevating the human rights of a few defectors, Roh said, the ROK policy was to gradually improve the life of many in North Korea and to persuade the DPRK to open and enact reforms. He closed by saying he sought the delegation's understanding because "we fear the danger and threat of (DPRK) collapse."

18. (C) Roh deflected a question from Representative Faleomavaega about North Korean leader Kim Jong-il's intentions and plans for the DPRK by saying that he was sure neither of the DPRK's intentions nor where it was headed post-Kim Jong-il. Instead, he returned to the theme of overcoming mistrust, which was a wall between South and North and the obstacle to solving the nuclear issue. He said that the way to proceed on the relationship was through dialogue, to reach agreement on a set of promises that will be kept, so that the DPRK will become a normal nation with an open system.

DPRK NUCLEAR ISSUE DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF IRAN

¶9. (C) At the end of the meeting, after Hyde had thanked President Roh and the two had exchanged pleasantries, Roh asked to return to the issue of North Korea again. He said that he saw Iran as embarked on a real quest for nuclear weapons, whereas the DPRK wanted the leverage that nuclear weapons would provide. He said the United States could, if it wanted to, give compensation to the DPRK to persuade it to get rid of its nuclear weapons program. But to do so, the United States would first have to overcome mistrust, which made each side suspicious that the other would not carry out its promises. Hyde replied that the DPRK also had a responsibility for overcoming mistrust, especially after breaking its word on the 1994 Agreed Framework. The DPRK's launching of seven missiles built anxiety rather than trust. Roh's rejoinder was that the United States should avoid getting diverted to peripheral issues such as counterfeiting and drug smuggling. The DPRK remained inherently suspicious that the USG was pursuing regime change. The United States needed to remove those worries, and even in the United States there were disagreements about whether USG policy was aimed at regime change or solving the nuclear issue. The ROK doubted the effectiveness of pressure tactics. Hyde replied that building trust was important, but that it was also important for the United States and the ROK to work together on the DPRK issue, using both pressure and dialogue.

TRAINING RANGE FOR U.S. AIR FORCES

¶10. (C) Representative Flake asked whether the issue of providing a training range for the U.S. air forces stationed in the ROK could be resolved. Roh said that he would do his best to resolve the problem, which also affected the Korean military and arose because of the ROK's limited territory.

PARTICIPANTS

¶11. (U) ROK:
President Roh Moo-hyun
National Security Advisor Song Min-soon
Presidential Spokesman Jung Tae-ho
Secretary to the President for National Security Cho

SIPDIS
Myoung-gyon
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Director General for
North American Affairs Cho Tae-yong

U.S.:
HIRC Chairman Henry Hyde
Representative Jeff Flake
Representative Dana Rohrabacher
Representative Melvin Watt
Representative Eni Faleomavaega
Ambassador Alexander Vershbow
Dennis Halpin, Congressional Staff
Robert King, Congressional Staff
A/POL McFeeters (notetaker)

¶12. (U) Codel Hyde cleared this message.
VERSHBOW